

Framework For Action 1999

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Building the Ontario Public Service for the Future:

A Learning Organization



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the Cabinet

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August 16, 1999

Dear Premier:

I am pleased to submit the third annual Framework for Action report on how the Ontario Public Service (OPS) is changing to meet the challenges of the next century.

The theme of this year's report is *Building a Learning Organization*. How well we serve the people of Ontario depends on the knowledge, skills and motivation of our staff, who are the heart of our organization. Supporting the learning and development of staff is critical as we move towards our vision of a more integrated and accountable public service, focused on our core businesses and constantly improving the quality of our services.

This report focuses on four aspects of becoming a learning organization –customer learning, organizational learning, team learning and individual learning. To illustrate how the OPS is changing through learning, we have included several stories in which OPS staff talk about their experiences and insights.

For example, we are building new, more positive and mutually rewarding relationships with customers and service delivery partners. We are using new technologies to change the way we work. We are building teams through shared learning. Staff, in many cases, are taking the lead to develop the kind of learning they need for themselves and their colleagues.

In addition, corporate strategies are supporting a learning organization. A new Human Resources Strategy for our workforce, launched this year, places a clear emphasis on learning and development of our people. Expanding use of technologies, within the framework of the OPS Information and Information Technology Strategy, is opening up new channels of communication across the organization and enabling individuals to access learning opportunities.

As we look to the future, I continue to be proud of the way OPS staff are managing change.

I thank you for your support and encouragement of our efforts to build a public service that will set the standard of excellence for others.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Burak".

Rita Burak

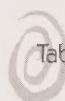






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A Message to Members of the OPS from Rita Burak, Secretary of Cabinet

This is the third year in which we have published a Framework for Action report on how the Ontario Public Service (OPS) is responding to the challenges of change. This year, as in the past, the focus is on you and your stories.

The theme is *Building a Learning Organization*. As this report points out, the real value of the learning organization is “in the becoming”. There is no point in time when we will declare victory and stop learning – any more than we are suddenly going to stop managing change. Through learning, we will move closer to our vision of the Ontario Public Service of the future.

We have already come a long way towards our vision, but the future will bring new challenges, testing our responsiveness and our spirit of innovation.

Our quality service journey is a learning journey – it is about continuous improvement. The link between quality service and learning was made in your feedback on last year’s Framework report, which had a quality service theme. You told us that you wanted to hear more about learning in the OPS, specifically how training and development opportunities are helping people adapt to new demands in the workplace.

This report illustrates how OPS staff are learning to work differently, to build new relationships, to forge teams, to use technology, and to reach out to customers and partners and learn from them. I want to assure you that the leadership of the OPS – myself, Deputies and the rest of the senior management team – share a strong commitment to building a learning organization.

I hope you will take advantage of the feedback opportunities that are always part of the Framework for Action process. I urge you to join in a discussion of OPS values, and their relation to a learning organization. In times of change, it is so important to reinforce fundamental values like integrity and upholding the public trust, particularly as we put renewed emphasis on creativity and adaptability in managing new relationships well and doing business differently.

It is also important to remind ourselves of how well we are doing. As I hope you know, in September 1998, the OPS won an international gold award for innovation in service to the public from the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management. This is something we should all take pride in.

I have full confidence, based on our learning together, that the OPS will continue to be a leader among public service organizations.

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1. On Becoming A Learning Organization

“... we will continue on our road to becoming a learning organization, with people who are willing and able to adapt to change, people who are committed to learning and continuous improvement, with the desire to be challenged and the expectation that they will be held accountable for results.”

Building the Ontario Public Service for the Future, Framework for Action, 1997

As we move towards our vision of a more integrated and accountable public service, focused on our core businesses and constantly improving the quality of our services, learning is not just important – it is essential. We all have to learn if we are to adapt to new challenges and meet new expectations as the OPS changes – as our customers change, as technology changes, as service delivery changes, as government priorities change, as the nature of our work changes.

Becoming a learning organization involves making learning part of what we do in order to achieve our personal performance goals, those of our team or unit, our ministry, and the OPS as a whole.

Experts tell us that the real value of the learning organization is in the *becoming*. It is not a destination to be reached; it is an ongo-

ing process of change and renewal. Just as the effort to provide quality in our services is an ongoing journey, so too is the building of a learning organization. Last year, in the feedback to the Framework for Action which focused on the

Quality Service Strategy, staff said that investment in learning was needed to help them continuously improve service quality, make better use of technology, and adapt to new ways of delivering services.

Learning includes formal training, such as taking a course, but there's a lot more to it. Learning is something that happens in our everyday working lives – when a team brainstorms a new solution to a customer delivery problem, or an individual is coached by a manager or colleague on handling a new responsibility.

Peter M. Senge, author of *The Fifth Discipline*, identifies five 'disciplines' for the development of a learning organization. They can be summarized as:

- individual learning on the part of people within the organization;
- an understanding of how people in the organization see the world so that the organization can learn from its successes and its mistakes;
- a vision of the future shared by all within the organization;
- team learning, because teams are central to the success of the organization;
- a framework to help people in the organization focus on the big picture.

How does an organization learn? It learns through its people, who understand how their individual performance contributes to the goals of the branch,



the ministry and the public service as a whole. Building a learning organization is a shared responsibility. It requires commitment to learning on the part of individual staff members and senior managers. It reflects our shared values.

Learning is not something that the OPS has suddenly discovered. People in the OPS have always had to learn to keep their skills and knowledge current. But everything is accelerated these days. Changing demands on public service, the impact of new technologies, pressure for greater efficiency and effectiveness, higher expectations of customers, and the increasing complexity of public issues are some of the factors driving change.

The learning organization concept is not new, but it is more relevant today than ever. Over the past decade, many organizations in the private and public sectors have developed strategies to build learning organizations. Throughout this report, there are comments from people and organizations with expertise and experience in

working towards a learning organization – including the OPS.

The report includes several stories that are told by people who work in *our* organization. They are stories about creative people and innovative initiatives in the OPS that exemplify the learning organization in its different aspects.

There are corporate OPS strategies that are having an impact on learning across the OPS. For example, work is being transformed by advances in technology, guided by the Information and Information Technology Strategy. We are building digital bridges across our organization, which will make greater integration of services and better communications a reality. Part of becoming a learning organization is

constantly striving to do things better, and recognizing that effort. The Amethyst Awards, which are in their seventh year of honouring individual and team excellence in the OPS, are part of building a learning organization.

Four other corporate strategies that support a learning organization are briefly described next.

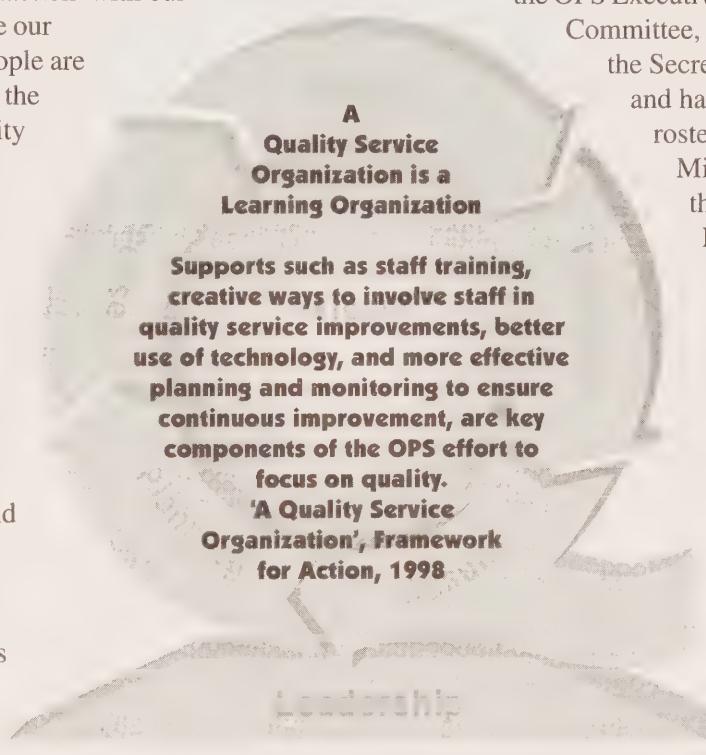
In a learning organization, every individual is growing and enhancing their capacity to create the future. As a result, our commitment to learning will be rewarded in our ability to implement strategic change, to respond to competitive challenges, and to share knowledge across divisions and departments. So, we should be prepared to make our plans for learning as carefully and as enthusiastically as we plan for the launch of a new product.

*3M Canada Inc, London, Ontario
... on the company's learning philosophy*

a) Quality Service Strategy

Last year's *Framework for Action* document launched the Quality Service Strategy, describing how the OPS is "Building a Quality Service Organization". The Strategy's goal is to increase public satisfaction with our services and improve our ability to deliver. People are recognized as one of the cornerstones of quality service - a quality service organization engages in continuous learning and ongoing improvements by involving its employees in the quality journey, providing them with training and other learning activities and recognizing quality achievements.

The strategy requires ministries to prepare quality service plans and recognizes the importance of learning to support the achievement of excellence in the OPS.



b) Human Resources Plan for the Senior Management Group

In 1997, the Human Resources Plan for the Senior Management Group (SMG) was officially launched. It was developed by the OPS Executive Development Committee, which is led by the Secretary of Cabinet and has a rotating roster of Deputy Ministers, and by the Centre for Leadership in Cabinet Office.

The HR Plan puts a great deal of emphasis on learning and development. It identifies mandatory corporate core competencies for the senior management group. They reflect the need for ongoing change management and support for innovation from leaders.

The corporate core competencies are being further developed for key leadership positions.

The Centre for Leadership, offers, through partnerships, a range of education, training and development opportunities related to the strategic business directions of the government, ministry Business Plans, and corporate core competencies. Senior managers can get up-to-date information on key government announcements and upcoming learning opportunities through the Centre's web site or fax-on-demand.

OPS values have been integral to leadership development, and the Centre for Leadership is continuing its series of seminars that focus explicitly on values. "We are reinforcing the message that values are part of our everyday working life, and that it is important for staff to see senior managers modeling those values," says Linda Clifford, Vice-President for Program Development and Delivery at the Centre for Leadership.

c) Human Resources Strategy for the OPS

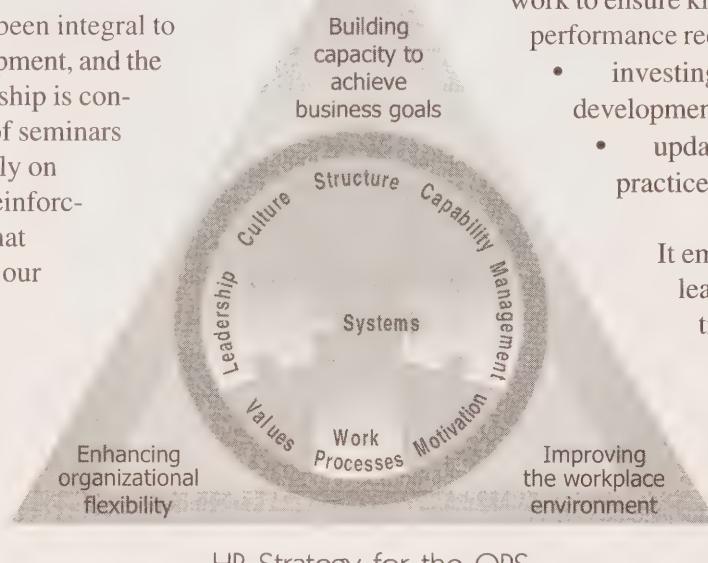
A new Human Resources Strategy for the OPS, launched in the spring of 1999, recognizes the need to invest in the ongoing learning and development of OPS staff.

The HR Strategy, called *Building Tomorrow's Workforce Today*, focuses action on three key areas:

- understanding current and future work to ensure knowledge, skill and performance requirements are met;
 - investing in learning and development; and
 - updating HR policies and practices.

It emphasizes that learning is more than training. Training usually refers to acquiring skills or knowledge specific to the technical or operational requirements of a

job. Learning happens on the job every day and can occur in formal and informal settings, in groups, or individually.



Investing in Learning and Development

- Every ministry will develop an annual learning plan that is tied to its business and human resource plans. The learning plans must show investment in staff learning. Branch learning plans will feed into and reflect ministry plans.
- Through the HR Strategy, MBS will develop new learning programs, provide resources for self-directed learning, and identify and share programs developed by ministries, that can be used across the OPS.
- Staff development initiatives will include upgrading generic skills, developing key competencies, updating technical or professional capabilities, and improving the managerial and supervisory skills of current and potential managers.

- Members of the OPS will be encouraged to participate in planning their own careers, and to take the initiative in pursuing developmental and learning opportunities.

The OPS will be a community of public servants who:

Continue to demonstrate dedication, integrity and excellence in serving the people of Ontario and their elected representatives.



Earn renewed confidence, trust and respect of the Ontario public and public sector workers in other jurisdictions.



Are motivated and able to adapt, learn and continuously improve.
Actively contribute to attracting and preparing a new generation of public administrators.



Build challenging, rewarding and mobile careers spanning the public and private sectors.

HR Strategy for the OPS: Building Tomorrow's Workforce Today

period of profound change, employees have to consider:

A number of guides and other tools have been developed to help bring the HR Strategy to life. These resources will be available on-line as well as on paper.

The HR Strategy's vision (box) reflects such values as integrity and protection of the public trust. It highlights the role of learning and continuous improvement. It recognizes values as a living part of our organization.

d) Reinforcing OPS Values

Values are an expression of our expectations and our standards. Values can be a powerful influence on commitment and performance. In a

- how certain fundamental values, like integrity and public trust, endure in a public service that is professional and accountable;
- how certain operational values emerge or are reinforced by the priorities of the day – such as relating to partners and agents in an era of alternative service delivery; and
- how we may change the way in which we interpret or “live” some values over time – for example, OPS staff have always been committed to providing good services; today, we are being more systematic about assessing and measuring how we are doing.

In each of the last two Framework documents, we have referred to OPS values such as integrity, fairness, effective relations with others, and continuous improvement. The Secretary of Cabinet asked a committee of senior managers to look at the whole area of values and write a statement that would resonate with OPS staff.

That statement is included here, and we are inviting discussion of it.

“The organization has a responsibility to ensure that people understand its vision and values. To move towards a learning organization, however, you must go further than putting the vision and values in front of people. They have to be able to see some organizational commitment. So if we have a value that says we are creative and responsive to change, people must have the flexibility to be able to do some things differently, to bridge those interministerial boundaries, to build new working relationships.”

Paul Scott, Chair, Committee on Values and Ethics, Assistant Deputy Minister, Management Board Secretariat

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Values Statement

- learning
- good worthy min
- informed & well cimed

- recognition
- work satisf

Members of the Ontario Public Service are committed to upholding the highest level of service quality and public trust.



- We are open and honest in our **B**ehaviour, creative and responsive to change, and committed to continuous self-improvement and integrity. We will demonstrate these values within the context of a professional and accountable public service.
- We are fair, consistent and committed to effective **R**elations with the general public, clients, customers, other staff within and across ministries, and with elected officials. In our relationships with our partners and agents, we are clear about expectations and criteria for success.
- Within the **S**tructures and **P**rocesses of government, we will continue to exercise fiscal prudence; we value training and organizational learning; and we are committed to consistency and fairness in our treatment of colleagues and staff.

Under the terms of The Public Service Act, and through an oath of allegiance and secrecy, public servants in Ontario are responsible to the public through the elected government and Ministers of the Crown.

2. How We Are Building A Learning Organization

When thinking about learning, many of us think of individual learning – taking a course; getting some new ideas from a book or a speaker at a seminar; or perhaps being coached by a manager or colleague. Individual learning is at the heart of a learning organization because an organization is only as informed, skilled and motivated as its people. Building a learning organization includes other kinds of learning.

Management Board Secretariat, in partnership with ministries, wrote a paper in 1992, called *Towards a Learning Organization*. It characterized the learning organization as a total system, including:

- customer learning
- organizational learning
- team learning
- individual learning.

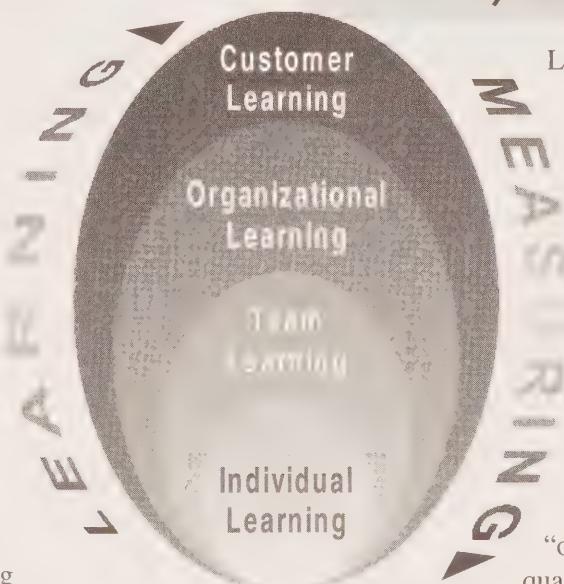
We have used that framework for the learning organization to talk about what is happening in ministries today.

Categories like these always have ‘fuzzy’ borders. It is difficult to identify an example of one type of learning that doesn’t include some aspects of the others. The categories simply help us recognize the different ways in which

we learn. They show us that learning is occurring in many different ways, and that it is helping people change how they work and improve how well they provide services. The stories also demonstrate the cornerstones of the Quality Service Strategy especially leadership, customers, people and partners.

a) Customer Learning

Learning from our customers has been an integral part of the Quality Service Strategy, launched in 1998. The best way to improve services to the public is to find out what works best for the users of public services, from their perspective. Listening to customers is helping us take an “outside-in” approach to quality service delivery.



The story that follows illustrates how a small group of OPS staff listened to customers, recognized they had a service delivery problem, and through teamwork, made improvements quickly. According to Joseph Denny, Manager of Customer Information Services at the Ministry of Transportation, staff have “internalized the standards of a learning organization”. They are continuing to listen to customer feedback, learning from it and each other, and are constantly making improvements.

Teaming Up With Customers to Improve Service

The Ministry of Transportation

On Joseph Denny's first day on the job with Ontario's road condition information service, he found that a mere 6% of the people who called in the previous 24-hour period had gotten through on the automated phone message system.

His first day as Manager of Customer Information Services for the Ministry of Transportation coincided with a huge snowstorm- the first of 1999 - when an unprecedented 98,000 calls came in on a single day. The information system, which normally provided timely and reliable service, could not cope with this volume of demand.

But Denny and his team didn't wait around to see what would happen during the next big snowfall. About two weeks later, when south-central Ontario was buried under a normal winter's worth of snow, in a matter of days they were ready with:

- a new phone system that re-allocates calls and adds up to 20 more lines as required;
- enhanced updating of information on the phone system i.e. four



times a day, 7 days a week, in both English and French;

- a website that provides the same information to the public as the phone message system, updated with the same frequency; and
- a new system of fax and e-mail service to give media outlets timely and accurate road information to pass on to the public.

How did it work? The ratio of customers served rose from 6% to an average of 98.8%. The website receives an average of 2,000 visitors a day. At the same time as service has improved during extreme weather conditions, telephone and technology costs have decreased. How did they do it? They analyzed what their customers wanted, and brainstormed new solutions. But first, they did some team-building.

Denny was the newcomer. He had just moved from what was then the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services in North Bay to MTO headquarters in St. Catharines. The people who worked in the road information service hadn't *really* worked together before either. "It was a very individualized work environment," says

Denny. "We provide service seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Staff work different shifts and weekends. There was little

communication between staff, no collaboration between tasks, and no sharing of new knowledge.”

The team sat down together and worked on a mission statement: “placing the customer at the centre of our service.” They conducted a customer survey, and then implemented their action plan to improve the service.

The team has taken its mission to heart. Customers are invited to make comments on the internet, by phone and fax. Customers may talk to a team member directly with comments

or suggestions. The staff member who talks to the customer often brings a recommendation to the next team meeting. There are daily brainstorming sessions. “We are constantly focused on exceeding all customer expectations,” says Denny. “I think we have internalized the standards of a learning organization within our team, with continuous improvement based on our mission, open communications within a collaborative environment, direct customer involvement in making the service better, staff empowerment and stringent monitoring and measurement.”♦

We are learning *with* our customers and service delivery partners, as well as from them. The theme of a new relationship with partners is one that surfaces in the stories that follow. There is a clear sense that real partnership is needed, with give-and-take and both partners learning from each other.

The partners in these two stories are very different – the municipal level of government and voluntary sector organizations. But there is a common challenge – adapting to a new environment.

Learning With and From Partners

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Local Services Realignment represents the most significant change in the provincial-municipal relationship in a century. Helping people manage the transition to new roles and responsibilities has been a shared effort.

The operating credo of the Provincial-Municipal Education and Training Secretariat (PMETS), formed in 1997 by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, is that both parties to the new relationship should learn from each other. “We did not go into this with the attitude that the Province is going to be the teacher, and the municipalities are going to be the learners. There is

learning required on both sides, and it works best if we do it together,” says Mayann Francis, the Assistant Deputy Minister who led the Secretariat at its inception.

The Secretariat involves municipal associations and other provincial ministries in its planning and delivery. It cooperates on training initiatives with municipal associations such as the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), and the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario.

“The fact that we always have municipal people at our training sessions sends a strong message about provincial-municipal partnership,” says project manager Tanya Wanio.

Training sessions and materials have been developed for OPS staff, as well as municipal officials. Heather Adams, Clerk/Administrator for the Township of Terrace

Bay, has presented at OPS training sessions on Northern governance issues. “Being a presenter actually made me sit down and think more about the big picture. I have also learned a lot more about the provincial perspective from sitting on the PMETS Steering Committee. And I’ve had a chance to network with my municipal colleagues.”

The Secretariat’s delivery partner in the North is the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines (MNDM). Aime Dimatteo, Director of MNDM’s Northern Services Implementation Project, says: “One of the things we heard from Northern municipalities was that they wanted coordination. They didn’t want everybody coming out in succession with training on a whole range of issues – from roads and bridges to Ontario Works.”

The Secretariat responded. One of the things it did was develop a training calendar to minimize overlap and duplication. It often asks to piggy-back its training on the agenda of a regular municipal conference. Dimatteo, who is based in Sudbury, says the Secretariat has promoted the idea that there is a wealth of experience and lessons learned among municipalities, which should be shared. The Secretariat is helping municipalities learn from each other through videos and publications highlighting how certain municipalities have dealt successfully with the transition.

Provincial-municipal training sessions are opportunities for cross-pollination of ideas and networking. “People are so involved in their day-to-day activities, it’s good to get away and hear a different perspective,” says Wanio.♦



Developing a New Relationship

The Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation

At the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, there is a new relationship with the voluntary sector.

The relationship is characterized by a recognition that “we are in this together”, says Allen Tyyska, project manager of the Voluntarism Unit in the Ministry’s Citizenship Development Branch. “The voluntary sector is not a creature of government. It has its own independent origins, and makes its own unique contributions.

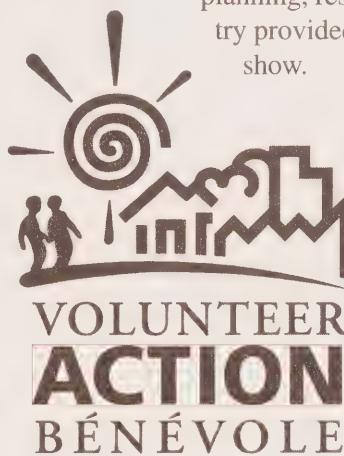
What we have in common is our interest in the well-being of Ontario communities.”

In 1997, following a recommendation by the Advisory Board on the Voluntary Sector, the government proposed a conference be held to bring the many players in the sector together to tackle some common issues. “We really didn’t know at the outset if this would work,” says Robert Montgomery, Director of the Ministry’s Citizenship Development Branch. “For one thing, the sector is not a homogeneous group. It includes cultural, sports, social service, educational, health and other kinds of organizations. There was also suspicion in the beginning as to our motives. But I think we were able to build a level of trust and mutual understanding.”

Paula Speevak Sladowski, Executive Director of the Volunteer Centre of Ottawa-Carleton,

agrees. She was one of about 30 voluntary sector representatives on the Steering Committee for the Ontario Voluntary Forum. “Each group had its own discomforts and misgivings. Many of us had recognized for some time that the sector needed to face some common issues together. But questions were raised, such as: Was this a real effort or a public relations exercise? Were we really involved or were we just going to listen?”

What turned things around was that the Steering Committee was given the mandate to organize the Forum. It took about eight months of planning, research and preparation. The ministry provided staff support, but didn’t run the show.



The Forum brought about 140 voluntary sector leaders and representatives of five ministries together in St. Catharines in September of 1998. It was a catalyst for relationship-building, not only between government and the voluntary sector, but among various players within the sector. “I do think it was a breakthrough for our sector,” says Speevak Sladowski. “It was the first time many people from different parts of the voluntary sector had met.”

Montgomery sees outcomes of enduring value. “Just one example – we now have a huge database of voluntary organizations across the province. It means we are much better able to communicate with them. When we had an announcement of interest to the sector recently, we sent it to 10,000 organizations. We could never have done that in the past.”

Another outcome is formation of a group of voluntary sector representatives who are doing the groundwork to get a new Coalition of Voluntary Organizations up and running. The Coalition will help build partnerships within the sector and with government and will communicate on common issues. Again, the sector representatives are in charge. Ministry planning consultant Maria Ariganello says her role is to serve as government liaison and to provide input.

The new relationship is also changing the way the ministry approaches issues. It was concerned about the issue of screening of community volunteers. A consortium of voluntary sector leaders was formed to carry out the Ontario Screening Initiative. “Rather than government coming in and saying to some organizations ‘you need to do better’, the message on screening will come from within the sector,” says Tyyska.

“We believe it will be more effective that way.”◆

A Community Learning Partnership

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

A learning partnership between the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and Community Literacy of Ontario was an unplanned outcome of the Ontario Voluntary Forum.

Joanne Kaattari, Executive Director of Community Literacy of Ontario, and Lorraine Holding, Manager of Volunteer Programs and Partnerships in the Agriculture and Rural Division of OMAFRA, met at the Forum and found they had the basis for a mutually beneficial partnership.

“We had an experienced on-line community and we were looking to provide training to them on staff-board relationships and responsibilities,” says Kaattari, whose organization is based in Barrie. “I had worked with the ministry before, and I knew they had wonderful resources in volunteer management.”

Holding returned from the Voluntary Forum and asked one of her staff to contact Kaattari. Four ministry staff from Guelph and Midhurst worked closely with Kaattari to design, develop and launch eight learning modules for the interactive on-line workshop. About 75 people participated in the fall of 1998. Financial support for the project came from the National Literacy Secretariat and the Ministry of Education and Training.

“We learned a lot about teaching and learning on-line,” says Holding. “It is a new way to put material out there for people to learn. We have put the course modules into a binder and sent them to all our field offices as a resource. Joanne wrote a great report, with input from our staff, on *Tips and Tools for Developing and Delivering an On-line Workshop*. Both partners expect to apply our experience to other learning opportunities on-line.”◆



b) Organizational Learning

Organizational learning is the most difficult type of learning in our framework to describe, and probably the hardest one to achieve. It includes learning by individuals and teams because an organization does not exist apart from its people. But it goes beyond learning that affects the behaviour or knowledge of individuals. It is learning that has an impact on how things are done, how the organization works.

Organizational learning is occurring in the OPS as ministries change how they do business, how they relate to customers and partners, how they use technology differently, how they deliver services differently, and how they support staff to adapt to the changes. Organizational learning involves using the tools for systemic change, and supporting the change “enablers” – people, technology, processes and service delivery.

The story of a “learning revolution” at the Ministry of Natural Resources reflects how fundamental the change can be when government opens up and shares information with the public. New relationships are created. The Ministry of Health is listening to its people about what they need to learn to cope with changes in organizational structures and processes. Eileen Mahood says a learning organization, in her view, is a “listening organization.”

A “Learning Revolution”

The Ministry of Natural Resources

David Watton calls what happened to the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) through the Lands for Life initiative “a learning revolution.”

Lands for Life is known as the largest land use consultation ever undertaken in North America, generating more than 60,000 public contacts. Watton, recently retired Director of the MNR’s Land Use Planning Branch, in Peterborough, thinks the learning involved in Lands for Life represents something “really fundamental” for building the OPS of the future.

Lands for Life was a planning process established to recommend the future of the Crown land base of Ontario, which covers about 85% of the province. Unlike previous planning exercises that were directed by MNR, Lands for Life took an “outside-in” approach to consultation. Three regional Round Tables were formed, each with 12 to 14 members from diverse interests, such as the forest industry, environmental groups, and recreational users, as well as the public at large. There was one OPS staff member on each Round Table.

The Round Tables directed their own consultations. They decided how the public consultations would take place. They decided what issues would be explored. They developed their recommendations to government. MNR sup-

ported the process, and involved other ministries, like Northern Development and Mines and Ministry of the Environment.

The transformational change for the Ministry came from:

- turning over what had been “our” job to the Round Tables;
- adopting a new and more open approach to information-sharing; and
- developing new ways to support decision-making, including technology-based analytical tools.

“We have a proud history and culture at MNR,” says Cam Clark, former Assistant Deputy Minister for Field Services, and now Deputy Minister of Northern Development and Mines. “MNR will look back on Lands for Life as a major turning point in building a new culture for a new century. And be proud.”

In order for the Round Tables to do their job, they had to have access to MNR’s information base. “The Ministry has a vast amount of information, traditionally for our own use,” says Watton. “Because this process was so open, it put huge demands on our information base. We had to make sure the information was in a format that people could use. In the

process, we had to develop a whole set of new analytical tools, which we are finding are now much in demand.”

Another thing happened. When the public knows as much as the public servants do, the relationship changes. “We can never go back to the old mode where we give the public a peek at the information we have. It’s now all out in the open.”

The Round Tables were not the end of the process. Their recommendations were consolidated, and in March, 1999, the government released *Ontario’s Living Legacy*, outlining its proposed land use strategy. The Strategy extends the number and size of protected areas, based mainly on the Round Table recommendations, and on a unique agreement called the Ontario Forest Accord. The Accord, which was reached when the government sat down with the forest industry and some environmental groups, represents another new relationship – growing from one that had been mostly confrontational.

“We’re not saying that everything is neatly tied with a ribbon, and there will never be any more disputes over land use, but we have the basis for a new relationship,” says Watton. “If we are all wise enough not to retrench, we can work together.”♦

Change through Learning: Learning to Change

Ministry of Health

“We are really trying to change the way we work in this ministry,” says Michelle DiEmanuele, Assistant Deputy Minister,

Organizational Development Office, in the Ministry of Health.

Part of the Ministry’s *Future Shape* initiative, the organizational development strategy is designed to build and sustain capacity to lead and respond to change and to support the development of a high-performing organization.

The organizational development strategy has three pillars:

- learning
- rewards and recognition, and
- performance management.

The learning piece of the strategy began with training and development sessions on areas identified by staff as important to the change process. More than 1000 staff have participated so far. Sessions included issues management training and workshops on building negotiation and problem-solving skills. A new series will focus on strategic issues management. Training resources are posted on the intranet.

The training is receiving high scores from staff evaluations. And people are asking for more. A couple of examples: “Follow up with specific sessions on key future-focused initiatives” and “Keep staff informed of what is working well and what needs improvement.”

One of the organizational changes the ministry is undergoing is creation of a new regional structure, which will bring people closer to communities and will integrate some of the separate streams within Health e.g. long-term care, hospitals, and mental health services. Eileen Mahood is the Regional Director in Sudbury. “This is going to be a team effort, and we are all going to be learning together because no matter how long someone has been with the ministry, this is a new way of doing business.”



Mahood, who chaired a ministry change management committee, sees the development of a learning organization this way.

“From the people perspective, we will be seen as a learning organization when we are a listening organization. We have to listen to what individuals need, what teams need, and what the ministry as a whole needs to perform well. The training sessions that we have offered respond directly to what we heard people wanted to learn.”◆

c) Team Learning

Teams do not happen just because a group of staff are called one. It takes work to build a team. One of the ways in which teamwork comes about is through shared learning, when members acquire new knowledge and skills together, and then work together on how to apply that learning to meet the team’s goals.

In the stories that follow, teamwork is part of the learning process, and learning is part of building teamwork. In the Ministry of Labour’s inspector notebook project, not only are field staff helping each other learn a new way of working, they are also sharing ideas to make learning to use the new technology simpler.

Learning a New “Field” Technology

Ministry of Labour

Field work in the Ministry of Labour just isn't what it used to be since the INB.

INB is the acronym for Inspector NoteBook – a project that is transforming work through technology and learning.

When John Baca started pushing the idea, back in the early 1990s, of providing his fellow health and safety inspectors with portable computers to work in the field, it was considered “pie in the sky”. Today, Baca, who is based in Halton District, is coordinator of the NoteBook project.

First, says Baca: “We had to get ministry buy-in, and then a commitment to the considerable institutional investment.” That process has taken time, and even now, the project is only beginning to show its true potential. The portables have been distributed in the field to employment standards officers and labour relations mediators, as well as health and safety inspectors.

The INB has involved a huge training initiative. “We went to every office and distributed the machines and gave the training on the spot. People had to show they knew how to use it – the basic operations – before they walked out the door with their equipment,” says Baca. Field staff are contributing ideas to make the system work better. “Ideas are coming in all

the time on how to make it simpler to use,” Baca says. That way, staff expertise and learning is being built into the new system.

The technology is being phased in, starting with electronic mail, to give people a chance to get used to it gradually. One of the reasons the project has been so well received is that it is field-driven. “It's by and for people in the field,” says Baca.

Most field staff were excited by the new opportunity. A minority were intimidated by the technology. “Sure, there were some people who said: ‘I'm never going to learn this.’ We worked really hard to build their confidence up.

I say to them – if I can do it, you can do it. I'm not an engineer. I'm just an average joe. The computer is a wonderful learning tool. It doesn't belittle you. It just tells you when you do something wrong. So you try again.”



With notebook computers and printers in their vehicles, inspectors will no longer have to write out inspection reports (which must be posted in the workplace) by hand. They will also be able to copy regulations and basic employer information directly from the computer into their reports.

Ron Brittain, Director of Information and Technology Management for the ministry, says a support network will be in place to keep people working in the field, rather than having to go back to the office to do administrative

work. "This project will allow inspectors to have more time with clients, to be more produc-

tive and more proactive. That is the overall business objective."◆

Building a Marketing Team for Ontario

Ministry of Economic Development and Trade

At the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, learning is part of team-building.

In the fall of 1996, the government launched a major new initiative to "Market Ontario" to the world as a great place to invest and do business. A new Investment Division was created in the then Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism to spearhead the effort to attract more investment dollars and jobs.

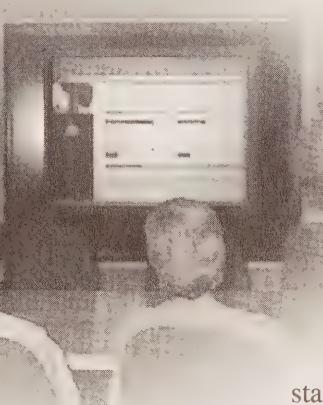
"We had a new organization and a new mandate; we had people who had come together from other units in the Ministry and elsewhere, and who had not all worked together before. And there was a lot of insecurity because of all the change over the previous two years," says Grahame Richards, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Investment Division.

"We needed to build a team that worked as a team. We needed to acquire new skill sets and new mindsets. We needed to create a real culture shift to turn what had been, to some extent, a financial assistance business into a sales and marketing business."

An important part of the solution was a training strategy where staff could "learn together and share". Staff members were asked to identify their training needs. Staff-led project teams invited proposals from training experts, and worked with the trainers to pilot-test training and ensure delivery. They also monitored and reported on the feedback from participants.

Mike Crowley, a senior consultant in the Investment Sales and Marketing Unit, was a team leader on presentation skills training. Part of the training involved personal coaching, using videotape to see how you come across to others. Staff feedback was positive. "I found

that the training increases your self-confidence, and gives you useful presentation techniques," says Crowley.



There was some reluctance around the idea that OPS staff were sales representatives for Ontario as an investment destination. It didn't sound like a public service role. But mindsets are changing. Staff are recognizing that sales and presentation skills are useful in many aspects of their work, says John Mitsopoulos, manager of Investment Sales and Marketing. "Part of what we are learning is good relationship management. It can take anywhere from a month to ten years

for a company to make a decision on new investment. We have to foster relationships over time so that when that decision is made, we're there and we have credibility."

Bill Anderson, manager of the Key Investment Account Program, is leading a team, formed in 1998, to visit large corporations in Ontario. To build teamwork, he says, there are weekly meetings where staff talk about how they are

doing, share experiences, and learn from presentations made by other ministries on initiatives that have an impact on the business community.

The division is so convinced of the benefits of training, it has been sharing some sessions with other divisions, other ministries, and with municipal economic development officials. ♦

d) Individual Learning

 Members of the OPS are increasingly taking more responsibility for their own learning and development. Technology, in particular, is supporting self-directed learning and development for many OPS staff.

Going beyond individual responsibility for learning, groups of OPS employees – like the administrative staff in the Criminal Law Division at the Ministry of Attorney General – are getting together to organize and design learning opportunities for themselves and their colleagues. Their commitment to learning is changing organizational attitudes.

Learning Opportunities Created For and By Staff

Ministry of the Attorney General

When Brenda O'Marra joined the Ministry of the Attorney General in 1989, she noticed what she considered to be a major gap. In the Criminal Law Division, there was continuous legal education and training for lawyers, who make up the majority of staff. But there was nothing for administrative staff. O'Marra decided to do something about that.

A decade later, the initiative she started and has continued to nurture is going strong. The annual administrative staff seminar drew more than 100 people this year. It is organized by and for administrative staff, and its agenda zeroes in on current issues and practical learning.

It took some persistence on the part of O'Marra and her colleague (now retired) Ann Russell to get the idea off the ground. They had to prepare a business case for senior management. "We were

well prepared and passionate about the cause.” A small working committee was formed, and the first seminar was held in 1992.

“Our committee didn’t have experience putting on seminars. We learned,” said O’Marra, who is Regional Operations Manager for the Toronto Region. “What often isn’t recognized is that we all have skills from living our lives. I’ve put on open houses, for example, at my home. That is an organizational skill. Our staff have all sorts of capabilities. One of the important messages from this year’s seminar is: don’t shortchange yourself. You are more skilled than you think.”

Taking part in the organization of the seminars has been a learning experience for Rita Young and Bronwen Roberts. Both of them feel it was a “stepping stone” to a new opportunity – working as project analysts for the Integrated Justice Project, which involves modernization of the business processes of the entire justice system.



Integrated Justice is one of the huge changes that are affecting staff in the justice field. One whole day, coordinated by Young, was spent on it at this year’s seminar. “I count learning as part of life. I’m always taking courses. Since joining the steering committee for the provincial seminar, I feel I have become better-rounded,” says Young. For her part, Roberts feels that involvement on the steering committee and being a presenter at seminars has helped her with communications and leadership skills.

O’Marra is hoping that, in the future, it will be possible to put on more training so that more ministry staff across Ontario can benefit.♦

Getting Connected at Showcase Ontario

Management Board Secretariat

Everybody knows technology is changing how we work. Showcase Ontario showed how

technology is changing how we learn and connect with each other.

Showcase was:

- an exhibition of innovative technology applications in the OPS;
- a forum on using technology to transform government for the 21st century, with

- keynote speakers from the public and private sectors; and
- a technology-related learning opportunity, with three education certificate programs designed especially for the conference.

It represented the first time that the seven ministry clusters created by the OPS Information and Information Technology (I & IT) Strategy – Economics/Business; Resources/Land; Human Services; Justice; Community Services; Transportation; and Finance – came together, along with a Corporate Ontario booth, to demonstrate their technology solutions. And it was the first time that they all got connected. “I could walk into any one of our 40 workstations and demonstrate any one of the 70 applications on display. It was amazing,” said Bob Kennedy, Director, New Initiatives

Marketing, Management

Board Secretariat

and producer

of the two-day event,

held in April, 1999

at the

Metropolitan Toronto

Convention

Centre.



But Showcase was about more than connecting terminals. It was about connecting people. More than a thousand OPS staff attended, along with about 300 private sector participants. “I think a lot of the informal learning

that went on involved finding out more about what the government is doing in technology, and what your own ministry and cluster are doing,” said Kennedy. “We heard from feedback that people also made contacts with private sector companies that had exhibits.”

The more formal learning opportunities were organized into three streams: enterprise information architecture, change management, and moving to the 21st century. To earn a certificate, participants had to attend a certain number of keynote addresses and other sessions in their stream for a total of about 10 hours over the two days. About one-third of those who attended received a certificate.

There were sessions, for example, on the I & IT Strategy of the OPS, the impact of technology on the global marketplace,

making the most of technology’s potential to meet business requirements, and improving access to services.

“People were free to move around between sessions to get what they needed most,” said

Kennedy. “That flexibility exemplified our approach to learning – you have responsibility for your own learning and you can make your own choices.” ◆

Learning At Your Own Time and Pace

Management Board Secretariat

Management Board Secretariat (MBS) is set to launch an eight-part interactive Plain Language On-Line course for MBS staff on the intranet. The course offers tips and practice exercises on making written material more understandable for everyone.

“Since the course is on-line, people can learn on their own time and at their own pace. There is no classroom work required – just personal

motivation to learn to write more clearly and concisely,” says Lisa Sherin, publications manager in MBS Communications Services Branch.



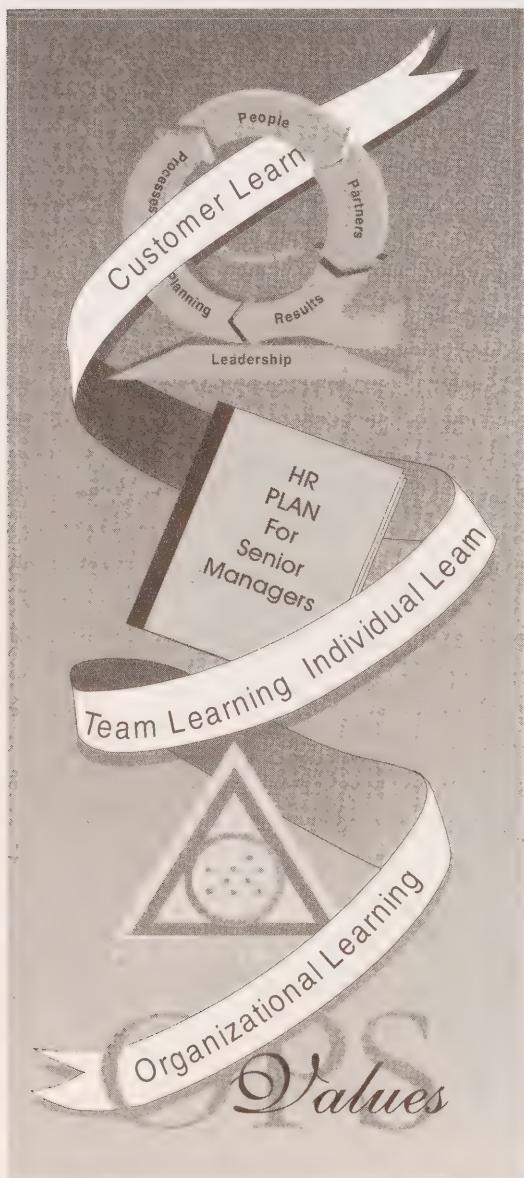
Access to the course will be by password, provided by the Branch. Sherin says the Branch is willing to share its course with other ministries who want to make it available to their staff.♦

The marketplace is exploding with new technologies and opportunities for everyone. To seize these opportunities, we must continue to develop our knowledge and skills. At Xerox, we know that business-related knowledge is the single most important factor in defining organizational competitiveness. Continuous skill development keeps us fast, flexible and better positioned to serve our customers, the company and ourselves.

*Ken Gravelle, Director, Strategic Resource Management,
Xerox Canada Ltd.*

3. Next Steps

This Framework report describes the importance of learning in achieving our vision for the future. The stories demonstrate different ways in which ministries are contributing to building a learning organization, through customer learning, organizational learning, team learning and individual learning. How will we know when the OPS as a whole is engaged in building a learning organization? A few indicators are suggested below:



- All staff are aware of the vision for the OPS of the future and understand how their work supports the vision.
- People in the OPS strive to live its values every day.
- The OPS invests in learning. Ministries have creative learning plans that support staff learning and development in a variety of ways. The effectiveness of learning plans is continually evaluated.
- We are becoming a quality service organization. People know their customers' needs and have the flexibility to respond appropriately and quickly.
- People at all levels of the organization feel that they have the knowledge and know-how to respond to work challenges and implement change.
- People are equipped with the necessary tools, including technology, to do their jobs well, and the training to use those tools.
- Staff are able to collaborate effectively across organizational boundaries with partners within and outside the OPS.

- People are recognized for their learning and their teamwork.
- Individuals feel responsible for their own development. At the same time, they feel supported by the organization in their efforts to learn and improve their skills and knowledge.
- New ideas are welcomed, and the organization supports appropriate risk-taking.
- The OPS is known as a workplace of choice – a place where people want to work.



Management Board Secretariat is developing a series of guides and workbooks as part of the Human Resources Strategy for the OPS. These workbooks are intended to help employees understand and develop capabilities that are important in our changing public service.

Available now in the HR Strategy Series are the following:

- *Building Tomorrow's Workforce Today: A Human Resources Strategy for the OPS*
- *Dictionary of Competencies in the OPS: Developing Workforce Capabilities*
- *Enterprise Competencies in the OPS: Assessing and Developing Yourself*
- *Project Management Workbook: Assessing and Developing Yourself*
- *Customer Service Workbook: Assessing and Developing Yourself*

Workbooks provide tools for self-assessment and self-development. Additional workbooks will be made available during 1999, including a manager's guide to learning and development outside the classroom.

Check the HR Open Web at <http://hr.mbs.gov.on.ca> for guides, workbooks and current information about scheduled learning programs on a variety of topics. Tips and templates for developing branch and individual learning plans can also be found on this Intranet site or by e-mailing the HR Strategy group at hrstrat@mbs.gov.on.ca



4. Facilitation Questions

Use the information in this report and these questions to begin your discussions on how we can build a learning organization.

1. What did you find to be the three most interesting ideas or pieces of information in this Framework document?
2. Which of the OPS values are most meaningful to you in your workplace? Can you think of times when values have guided your behaviour?
3. What's the best learning initiative that you've been involved in?
4. What ideas do you have to support learning in your ministry?

Tear-Out Survey

Building the OPS for the Future: A Learning Organization

Please fill out this tear-out form and share your feedback and ideas with us.

1. Did you find the Framework for Action 1999 report informative?

Yes _____

No _____

2. Did this document add to your understanding of a Learning Organization.

Please circle one:

1

2

3

4

5

Very helpful

Not helpful

What was most helpful?

What other additional information would have been helpful?

3. Are you aware of other good learning initiatives in the OPS? What are they and who could we contact to find out more about the example?

Learning Initiative: _____

Contact: _____



4. What particular topics related to the direction of the OPS would you like to see covered in future reports?

5. What other kinds of information would be helpful to you as we continue to change and improve?

Ministry and location (optional): _____

Please return this completed survey (and add extra pages if you wish to respond in more detail) to:

OPS Restructuring Secretariat
Cabinet Office
5th Floor, Ferguson Block
77 Wellesley Street West
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3
or
Fax: (416) 325-7798

Thank you for making your views known and being part of an OPS continuous improvement effort.

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